

COMMISSIONERS APPROVAL

CHILCOTT *gc*

LUND *BL*

THOMPSON *AT*

TAYLOR (Clerk & Recorder)

Date.....March 07, 2006

Members Present..... Commissioner Greg Chilcott and
Commissioner Betty Lund

Minutes: Glenda Wiles

Commissioner Thompson was in Washington, D.C., for a NACO conference.

The Board met with members of Ravalli County Local Government Study Commission in regard to their request for more funding for the education of citizens on the work of the Study Commission on the form of local government. Alec reiterated this is a voter-approved process, and although the citizens did not want a mill placed on their taxes, they do want this endeavor funded. Commissioner Lund indicated she attempted to meet with Study Commission Member Vicky Bohlig yesterday, but was not able to. She stated she asked about insertion of information into the Ravalli Republic and a member of the Commission stated the Republic did not have enough circulation. She checked into some costs and found out the following:

The costs are \$635.00 to insert a flyer in the Ravalli Republic on Wednesdays with 8,000 papers being delivered. She called Towne Mailer to determine the price to insert the information in the Voter Pamphlet: \$1,170.00, or to mail \$3,360.00 for the 18,000 mailers which would need to be printed. She stated the Commission has advertised in the Bitterroot Star, whose rate of circulation is much less than the Ravalli Republic.

Alec explained the process the Commission intends to follow, and hopes they can send information out on the tentative report and final report. He stated they are also looking at a survey, which they are not sure they will do, due to the low rate of return according to other Local Government Commissions. He stated the Study Commission Members do not want to be criticized for not getting this information out to the voters.

Commissioner Lund asked Alec if they could hire high schoolers to distribute surveys at Grocery Stores. Alec stated they discussed utilizing an insert in the shopping bags. Alec stated the local paper focuses on the south valley and the north valley utilizes other news venues. He said it is important that the information goes out to all the voters. It is up to them if they respond or not. Alec agreed they need to keep the costs down as much as they can while at least getting the information out to the voters.

Commissioner Chilcott expressed some confusion on the role of the Commission in this process. He stated the voters elected a Study Commission to research and come up with a determination on whether local government is broken and if so, recommendations to the voters for fixing it. He stated he agrees the public needs to be involved in the process and the Commission has brought their meetings to each community. Alec stated Commissioner Chilcott's confusion or thoughts narrow the process of what they are attempting to do. Commissioner Chilcott addressed the history of the amendment allowing for this process to take place every ten years. Alec stated the funding language has changed over time. The funding was set up as one mill, which was taken away. James stated amendments removing the mill levy passed in 1999; the language regarding county funding was changed from 'shall' to 'may'. County funding became optional.

Commissioner Chilcott stated the voters agreed to elect the three Commission Members. However, it seems that the Commission is attempting to have consensus building to sell a product. He thought they would make findings, have recommendations, and put it in the voters' pamphlet. Commissioner Chilcott felt any extra money (other than the voter pamphlet) would be a 'market expense' and, as a taxpayer, he is not prepared to see the money being spent in that manner. As a Commissioner, he is not prepared to take an expensive bite of selling their opinions. He stated he is getting 'mixed messages' of what the findings are and the Commission should only be making recommendations. The voters then buy into the recommendation or they don't.

Alec stated he takes exception to Commissioner Chilcott's language. It is not 'selling this', but 'educating' the public. Vicky stated the market and selling of their agenda is not their intent or mission. She stated she takes issue with that. This is education for the public. Though the meetings seem to be taking a certain direction it does not mean the Commission will take that and use it. Vicky stated they are not marketers, but educators. She stated they could not control who comes to the evening meetings, and it is important to reach every member of the public. Realizing that some may not respond, they still have an obligation to educate the public by direct mailers.

Alec stated they have tried to engage 'the most people they possibly could'. They have gone out to the various communities and organizations, presenting materials for review. The ability to get the message out in a broader manner will depend on the amount of money they have for education. Alec stated individual Commission members have absorbed some of the costs, such as the travel, copying, etc. Commissioner Chilcott stated the Commissioners do not want the Commission to spend any money out-of-pocket. Alec stated they want to get the message out, and therefore have only used county funding for the taking of minutes, etc.

James said the Montana Statute reads that the Commissioners must provide office, meeting space and clerical assistance. They may provide other support.

Commissioner Chilcott stated it seems the Commission is making a recommendation to the voters and he asked how and why they should use tax payer monies to make those recommendations. James stated that is a fuzzy line, but you can use funds to show the

public the recommendation. You must make sure the money is used for education, not special interest. He stated the language of the recommendation is important.

Alec stated at the meetings they have played devil's advocate to various issues, such as the delivery of services. When they develop the educational materials for the public he would like to deliver it in a straightforward way, with facts in front of them. At the public meetings there are some citizens that present 'monkey business', but the actual recommendation must be based on fact.

Commissioner Chilcott asked who the best-informed citizens are. He answered his own question saying, 'the four of you are, plus the minute-taker'. He also noted, 'through this process in the valley, you have heard a lot of positions on the form of government.' He suggested they be in a position to formulate individually what their recommendations are going to be. He wondered what kind of information the Commission will receive from a survey. Vicky stated she has not received a balanced opinion from the County, and she is still looking at that.

Alec said only six people attended the public meeting in Florence. They need to get the information out in order to obtain input. They do not have a majority opinion yet.

Commissioner Chilcott stated he learned from reading the minutes that Alec comments on almost everything. He said the Commission was elected to review the option, boil it down and make a recommendation. He said consensus building as not part of the job.

Alec stated they are not talking about consensus building. They are looking at obtaining a majority opinion. If they expect a majority of the voters to adopt the recommendation, they must expect the majority can make an informed decision. He stated they are not advocate for any recommendation at this time, but after the complete study they will advocate their recommendations to the voters.

Commissioner Chilcott stated they would agree to disagree. They were elected to do the research, make the determination of what and how to fix, and let voters decide if they agree. In his opinion, the Commission was not elected to make a determination and make the voters agree with it.

Vicki said when she and Alec visited with Commissioner Chilcott last week she disagreed with how Commissioner Chilcott sees the Commission. She stated the law allows them to develop this study in any way they see fit. They are regular people trying to focus on what makes government better for the citizens. The three Commission members could have sat down and made a decision without any public input, but what good would that do? They needed to reach out to the public and they have that right to do so.

Commissioner Chilcott agreed the citizens need input, and stated the Commission has done a great job. But the question is how far and how much will they spend to get this into people's homes. It could be taken to the most ridiculous level. He said the more the

county does to educate, the more money we spend. In 1995 the funding for the Commission was \$30,000. At that time the county had reserves at 17.5%; now the county only has 4.6% in reserves. Alec stated maybe those figures represent a problem in County government. Alec further stated "If I were in your shoes, I would be looking for ways to make my job better. We understand you are under severe fiscal restraints, but we need to dig down and see what is available to make the situation better."

Commissioner Lund said if there were five Commissioners plus a County Manager that will be an expensive thing. Every department is at the wall and they all need more money and people. She stated she understands the Commission has worked hard in their endeavor. The biggest problem they have is funding. The costs for a mailing are approximately \$4,000 for 18,000 pieces, plus Town Mailer brings it up to \$8,000. If they added the money from the 2005 budget that the Commission did not spend, that would give them \$10,000. She stated there are ten grocery stores and they could hire high school students to deliver the survey at a cost of approximately \$900.00 versus the \$8,000 for the mail out. Commissioner Lund stated she is trying to think of ways to get this information out.

The Commissioners then discussed the upcoming budget and what funds they needed to set aside for litigation and the new voter system. Commissioner Chilcott stated he is a strong advocate about getting this information out to the public in a voter pamphlet and would like to see it done for around \$4,000.00.

The Commission members stated they feel it is important to have a survey. Then they will develop a tentative and final plan based on the requirements of the statutes. Commissioner Lund felt they could not afford a survey.

Alec said the Commission is attempting to utilize the money in a frugal yet responsible manner. Missoula County spent \$18,000.00 just for the phone survey. He stated this Commission realizes they could not afford that kind of money.

Commissioner Chilcott said the tentative plan could include a response from the citizens.

Commissioner Lund said if the Commissioners give them an extra \$5,000 that will take them to the next budget year. But, expressed again that the Commission did not need to send out mailers for the tentative and final plan.

Alec stated they have checked statute deadlines and courtesy deadlines for the County Attorney. They want to accommodate the County Attorney as it is important to have the ballot language done correctly. They also have a deadline for the Clerk & Recorder filing, which is 90 days before the election (in August). Prior to that tentative hearing, there could be one or more hearings and then the final meeting before August with the ballot language.

Commissioner Lund said in light of this they need another \$5,000 before July 1st. Therefore a budget amendment is needed.

Alec felt the County should provide the secretarial assistance, but they are paying the County back out of those funds for secretarial funds. Commissioner Lund agreed they need more money and maybe the Commissioners could 'eke' out \$6,000.00. Commissioner Chilcott said he is 'hesitant to raid the litigation fund'. There is \$57,000 in GUC, but Nedra needs \$36,000 for a voting booth. Commissioner Lund stated with \$6,000 they could do a mailing, utilizing Town Mailer and county products, having Regina print labels and county personnel to apply labels.

Commissioner Lund made a motion to take \$6,000 from Line 861 of the Commissioners budget, transferring it to the Study Commission, bringing the total up to \$11,000 for this fiscal year. Commissioner Chilcott seconded the motion. Discussion of the motion then took place in regard to preparing a transfer of amendment to the budget by resolution. Glenda will double check the fund number for Local Government Study Commission, if it is not within the General Fund a budget amendment will need to be done by public hearing. All voted "aye".

In other business, the Board reviewed the request for final approval for Grenell Hamilton Heights Block 3, Lot 7B. Interim Planning Director Karen Hughes was present and stated the developer could not apply the dust abatement at this time but does have a check for the amount of dust abatement as per the bid from the contractor. Commissioner Lund made a motion to grant final approval of this Subdivision. Commissioner Chilcott seconded the motion and all voted "aye".

Commissioner Lund made a motion to adopt the following budget transfers by resolution as follows:

- Resolution No. 1807 in the Planning Department in the amount of \$1,000.00
- Resolution No. 1808 in the Administration Department in the amount of \$1,291.00 for the purchase of equipment.

Commissioner Chilcott seconded the motion and all voted "aye".

Commissioner Lund made a motion to ratify the Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Road Department from March 7, 2006 through June 30, 2007. Commissioner Chilcott seconded the motion and all voted "aye".

Administrative Officer Skip Rosenthal also discussed the position announcement for the Planning Director position. Discussion also included the comp time accrual hour-to-hour up to 40 hours with no payout. The Commissioners concurred this announcement needs to be posted through the National Planning Service, the Internet, and locally at the Job Service.

Skip also addressed the hiring date for the Extension Agent position. Skip stated this position is a contracted service position and an actual employee of MSU. Skip stated the County should not take on an actual employee. He stated the County only allocates a certain amount of money and is not responsible for any extra costs.

Skip also presented Employee Action Forms for signature.

Commissioner Chilcott brought up the need to change the name of the Disaster of Emergency Services (DES) into the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). He also stated they need to utilize the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator (Charmell Owens) as a Deputy of the OEM. This will allow some continuity and assumption of duties if Ron is out.

Skip also developed a job description for the GIS Department Head and asked the Commissioners to review this.

Commissioner Chilcott yielded the chair to make a motion to appoint Commissioner Lund as the Commissioner to assist in duties of the Upper Bitterroot T.V. District. Commissioner Lund seconded the motion and all voted "aye". Commissioner Lund stated she has visited with Robert House and he has agreed to take the equipment down and work with the power company to turn the power off.